ENGL 015

Assignment 3

July 20, 2011

Audience: Myself, amateur street racers, and anyone on the boarder of adulthood.

Show Me How To Live

“Oh, God. Not this night...alright, sleep. I’m sleeping. Count sheep, no, no, no. Don’t think. Just sleep..I am sleeping…Who am I kidding”. As my desperation grew, I realized that sleep is not an option at the moment. I snatched my car keys and flew down stairs. “Some air” I told my mom as I was leaving the house.

“By 11” she replied. It was the mid of February of last year. I was a couple of months away from graduating high school and I had an interview for scholarship the next day. As I started the car, I texted my friend Ryan: “b at urz in 5”. I picked up Ryan from his house and we headed for some fries and milkshake.

“Chill bro, it’s just an interview” explained Ryan.

“I don’t get it, why do they have to interview me for a soccer scholarship?” I asked rhetorically.

“You don’t get to ask the question, it’s their money,” joked Ryan. On the way, we talked a bit about school and homework. While at the restaurant, I bumped into two old friends on mine, Nick and Ethan. They joined us and all four of us enjoyed a good snack. We lost track of time; it was almost an hour later that we realized it was getting late. After we left, we both stopped to the signal on an empty freeway, they were behind me. For some reason, the stop was longer than usual. Moments after we both stopped, a honk broke the silence. Ryan and I looked back and noticed that Ethan was flashing his high beams. “wonder what he’s up to” I thought. I then got a text message from him. “stll gt it? 1st 2 gas st.” the text read. I smiled and figured out why not, I might as well get the hype out so that I could sleep. I honked three times as I accepted their challenge. Seconds later I found them both on the next lane. My excitement was building up as I anticipated the green light.

Now here is a thing you might want to know before we get deeper. I am one of the best drivers you will ever meet. My driving skills are the only thing I brag about and are the only thing I am proud to brag about. Yes, my ego is that big when it comes to driving. I drove my first car when I was thirteen, and since then I couldn’t keep my hands of the steering wheel. Needless to say, all my friends know for a fact that I am an awesome driver, and a better racer. For me, speed frees my soul. It was like I do not belong to this world whenever I drive. Speed opens my eyes to a new pace in life. With a step on the pedal, it is I who determines the speed at which I desired to exist in, not time. But don’t get me wrong, I am not like one of those kids you see on MTV’s “I am a street racer” show. I was a senior at high school and I was my class’s valedictorian. I was on my school’s tennis and soccer teams. I did not watch the second Fast and Furious movie. My car is not called the “911 beast”; it’s called “car”. My 2003 Saturn is not “pimped” and I would rather save the money for college. My dream is not to own a Bugatti and rule an underworld racing community, it is to become a good father and a successful doctor. I guess I found myself attached to this habit because it discharged me from my everyday/seemingly perfect life. Racing was illegal and that is why I liked it. It made me feel as though I was someone else for a couple of minutes, someone that occasionally didn’t tuck his shirt in.

The race was on. And as usual, I performed my rituals. I slipped my feet out of my slippers and examined the pedal’s texture with my toes. I gave my palms the pleasure of squeezing the life out of the steering wheel. I dampened my lips and ground my teeth. I maxed up the air conditioning and played my favorite song, “Show Me How To Live” by Audioslave. I then exhaled like I have never exhaled before. I exhaled all of the tension, the anger, the fear, the chaos that was flooding me. I exhaled knowing that it was my turn to take control. The whole universe moved faster with every forced blink. I did not want to close my eyes. I wanted to live this forever. “This must be what heaven looks like,” I told Ryan.

With less than one minute into the race, I was faced with an intersection on a freeway. The intersection was just like any other, except that it wasn’t. The cross point was lit with dim lights that emerged from strategically placed angles. Every other way that led to that cross point was illuminated with increasing degrees of shadow. It was as though the intersection point was the center stage and something was meant to happen there for the not so present audience. I, as usual, was too busy enjoying my freedom and left the interpretation of signals for my unconsciousness. After some time, you would stop processing the signals and they would merely become obstacles. The green light on this intersection wasn’t one, but the incoming SUV was. As I was crossing the intersection, a Ford Explorer at 75 miles/hr was heading my way from a perpendicular angel. At that moment, I failed to comprehend what exactly happened but I realized that what happened was too faultless to be real. I was blinded by the not-so-far shining light of the incoming vehicle. I realized I had to act quickly or else it will be too late.

“Watch it!” yelled Ryan. I changed gears to hit maximum speed before the collision, I then hit the brakes and returned the gear back to its initial state while steering to the very left. By doing so, I drifted the lower segment of my small vehicle in a circular angle that made me parallel to the incoming car. I was safe, or at least I thought I was. The following seconds made no sense to me as I was shocked by what could have almost happened. I re-inclined the gear to avoid being hit from the back but my state of mind never reminded me that my leg was still on the pedal. The drift that I was in was only one that every car racer dreamed about. The uncontrollable drift then, along with the increasing acceleration, shifted me right to the sidewalk where the hardest brick wall awaited for my arrival. I tried steering effortlessly. But I was no match to the flow. I gave up and for a second there everything turned dark.

The darkest second of my life. My feelings were senseless. I was feeling something different, something my senses failed to process. My body was thrown forward violently. The seatbelt knocked the air out of me. The airbag exploded in slower than I had imagined. The perfection of the glass no longer existed. As my body was recovering from the state of shock I that it was diffused into, I was gradually able to grasp reality. The smell of gasoline filled my nasal cavity. My mouth tasted like little grains of sand, so dry that it felt fluid free. And although my glasses were lost in the chaos, I was able to see like it was my first day on earth. I opened my eyes with several blinks. Everything looked detailed and blurry at the same time. My eyes turned imagination to reality. I was dreaming while I was awake. The noise I was hearing was gradually getting louder by the second. The sound of the brakes, the sound of the collision, the sound of the glass shattering, the sound of the metal breaking, the sound of the car alarm, and the sound of that heavy guitar tune from the song were all mixed together and their sound was regulated by my fading heart beat. I wasn’t able to move a limb. I felt numbness at the very tip of my fingers. Although my blood never felt so warm, I was shivering with fear and cold. Seconds later, I was faced with the reality of the inevitable. The excruciating pain was indescribable. That moment propelled me into a state of weakness. Never before had I felt so vulnerable. Exposed. Pathetic.

I was awakened at a hospital to the touch of the nurse examining my stitches.

“How are you feeling?” asked the nurse. I didn’t reply. I was just staring into an empty wall. A couple of minutes later my parents entered the room along with my doctor. My mother ran across to me and held my face with tearful eyes. My father just stared at me with blank, judgmental eyes.

“Strong kid. How are you doing?” asked the doctor.

“Alright” I replied.

“You’re lucky you know. Not so many make it after such an incident” added the doctor. He then spent the next moments examining me and asking me to perform a couple of movements to ensure my well-being.

“Sorry, it wasn’t my fault” I said to my parents.

“Don’t worry about that right now, just get better” my father replied. The next day all of my three friends visited me at the same time. Ryan was on a wheel chair. His injuries were critical but were less severe than mine.

“You win” joked Nick.

“What happened” I asked.

“We stopped immediately before you were about to hit that Ford. You then slammed to the wall on the side. We called emergency and they took you guys to the hospital and here you are” answered Ethan.

On that day, I won the race. On that day I also broke my left leg, fractured my pelvis, strained my lumbar, displaced my shoulder, and bruised my body. On that day, I lost all my chances of getting the scholarship. On that day, my car was confiscated. On that day, I spent the first day of my next five months on a wheelchair. On that day, I endangered the life of a dear friend. So if I ever had the chance to relive that moment, would I do anything differently? Of course I would. Do I regret what happened? Not a chance. I have never felt so proud in my entire life. Not only did I escape a difficult first crash, I saved whoever crossed that red light from being hit although it was their fault. I matured that day. I still drive recklessly, and I don’t think that will change, not for another accident or two. But now I take things more seriously and I weigh the consequences of my actions. I now look at the world differently and I am able to see beyond what is obvious. *I was thankful for what happened that night*. That night could have either gone perfectly fine or it could have ended miserably. Who knows what was waiting for me after that intersection? Dislocating my shoulder is better than dislocating my neck. At least I did not die. Right?

Months later, I visited the crash site and I couldn’t stop laughing at how naive I was. I couldn’t stop laughing at how ignorant I was for convincing myself that I did nothing wrong and that it could have been worse. Trying to find that silver lining that didn’t exist. I realized that whether I like it or not, I’ll have to eventually face myself and admit that what I did was my fault. When will that moment come? That, I am not sure of. Why? Because admitting that I was wrong will be the first step to my recovery, a recovery that I am not yet ready for.